

Successfully Growing Australian Native Plants and ... Colour Your Garden with Australian Natives

by Geoff and Bev Rigby

Publisher: *Bloomings Books*, 2005 compendium edition. 224 pages, hardback; colour photographs. ISBN 0646451057. RRP \$39.95

This compendium edition consists of two books bound together. *Successfully Growing Australian Plants* by Geoff Rigby and *Colour Your Garden with Australian Natives* by Geoff and Bev Rigby. In these well presented books the authors have shared with the reader their many years of expertise and passion for our Australian natives. *Successfully Growing Australian Plants* is 'a practical guide to simple do's and don'ts when planning, establishing and developing a home garden and growing and propagating your own plants.' *Colour Your Garden with Australian Natives* is a coloured guide to native plants for the home garden.

Successfully Growing Australian Plants has chapters on: Planning Your Garden, Establishing and Maintaining Your Garden, Garden Development and Propagating Your Own Plants. The book also includes information on flower arrangements, pressed flowers and photography. Each chapter is colour coded and concludes with a summary of do's and don'ts with page references back to the text. There are just over 30 tables with plant lists for a wide variety of locations and conditions, for example: native plants that will flower reasonably well in shaded conditions, plants for cold frosty conditions, plants with perfumed flowers, plants with perfumed foliage, plants suitable for pots, plants suitable for Bonsai culture, shrubs suitable for screens or hedges, vines and creepers for fences and trellises and many more. I thought these tables were particularly useful. This book has many beautiful photographs of gardens throughout, including photos of botanic gardens, bushland, street plantings and private gardens.

The second book, *Colour Your Garden with Australian Natives* by Geoff and Bev Rigby, has chapters on different coloured

flowers, e.g. 'reds and pinks', 'yellows and green' and 'blues, purples and mauves'. For each species in each of these chapters there is a very clear photograph, a short description on plant form, and useful notes on plant cultivation. Following the flower colour chapters is an interesting chapter on 'Colour without flowers', which includes fruits, nuts and colour in foliage, tree trunks and bark. Again, all species described are beautifully illustrated with photographs. The book concludes with a summary of plants and flowering times for all flowers described, and for 'Colour without flowers' there is a summary of plants and their features.

Another dimension to *Successfully Growing Australian Plants* is the addition of two traditional stories: *The Flannel Flower Story* from the D'harawal People and *The Waratah Story - How the Waratah became Red* - from the Awabakal People. Similarly, in *Colour Your Garden with Australian Natives* each chapter begins with a gorgeous short poem or part poem: for example 'Colour Without Flowers' begins with -

Flowers that smell like sweetest honey
Flowers like puffs of snow
Fruits like little wooden goblets
Buds a dark-red glow -
Darling of the summertime,
Wherever it may grow.
Nuri Mass. *Australian Wildflower Magic*
(the Writers Press, 1967)

This adds a nice touch to both books and illustrates the authors' love of our native flora.

The last chapter in *Colour Your Garden with Australian Natives* is a guide to native gardens around our big beautiful country. Descriptions are provided for 37 gardens. Each of these gardens is described with interesting notes on its history and devel-



opment. I was pleased to see this updated with a table in *Successfully Growing Australian Plants*, with the addition of another 6 gardens around Australia. Only one native garden is listed in the vast and diverse Northern Territory: the Darwin Botanic Garden. Given the size and diver-

sity of vegetation in this state, the Olive Pink Botanic Garden in Alice Springs and the Alice Springs Desert Park are notable omissions from this list.

A main disappointment with both books is that no mention is made of the potential threat of some native species as environmental weeds. A few examples of known environmental weeds include: *Acacia saligna* (Golden Wreath Wattle), *Pittosporum undulatum* (Sweet Pittosporum) and *Sollya heterophylla* (Bluebell Creeper). In my opinion the authors should have either excluded known environmental weeds or highlighted their potential threat to surrounding remnant bushland.

If you are looking to establish a native garden, or add some native plants to your garden, this compendium edition is well worth a look. Bev and Geoff Rigby's books have a lot of practical information to offer. The strength of these two books is the high quality colour photographs throughout, which beautifully illustrate the text.

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Thankyou from the Editors

Sincere thanks to our book reviewers for 2006 who provided interesting and insightful comments on a wide range of books and other materials:

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